

milton friedman the social responsibility of business

Milton Friedman and the Social Responsibility of Business: A Deep Dive into an Enduring Debate

milton friedman the social responsibility of business is a phrase that instantly calls to mind one of the most influential and controversial perspectives on corporate ethics. Friedman's viewpoint, famously articulated in his 1970 New York Times article, challenged the rising trend of businesses engaging in social causes beyond profit-making. But what exactly did he argue, and why does his stance continue to provoke debate decades later? Let's explore Milton Friedman's take on business responsibility, the broader implications of his ideas, and how they intersect with contemporary corporate practices.

Understanding Milton Friedman's Core Argument

Milton Friedman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, was a staunch advocate for free-market capitalism. In his seminal essay "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits," Friedman asserted that the primary responsibility of a business is to its shareholders. According to him, when corporate executives spend resources on social initiatives unrelated to profit maximization, they are essentially imposing a tax on shareholders, employees, and customers without their consent.

The Fiduciary Duty of Business Leaders

At the heart of Friedman's argument lies the concept of fiduciary duty. Business leaders are agents of the shareholders, and their main obligation is to operate the firm in a way that maximizes shareholder value. Friedman believed that diverting company resources to social causes—no matter how noble—transforms executives into "tax collectors" who impose their personal values on others.

This perspective hinges on the idea that social welfare is best improved not by corporate philanthropy but through government action, where elected officials are accountable to the public. Thus, Friedman saw the pursuit of profit as not only a business imperative but also a social good, arguing that when companies excel financially, they create jobs, generate wealth, and stimulate economic growth.

Contextualizing Friedman's Views in Today's Business Environment

While Friedman's perspective was clear-cut, the business landscape has evolved significantly since 1970. Today, concepts like corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental, social, and governance (ESG)

criteria, and stakeholder capitalism dominate conversations about what companies owe to society.

From Shareholder Primacy to Stakeholder Inclusivity

Modern businesses often face pressure to consider a broader array of stakeholders—employees, customers, communities, and the environment—beyond just shareholders. This shift challenges Friedman’s shareholder-centric model by suggesting that companies can and should create value for multiple groups simultaneously.

For example, companies adopting ESG principles aim to operate sustainably, treat workers fairly, and govern transparently, believing these actions not only fulfill ethical duties but also enhance long-term profitability. This nuanced approach acknowledges that social responsibility and business success are not mutually exclusive.

Critiques and Support of Friedman’s Thesis

Friedman’s thesis has been both lauded for its clarity and criticized for its perceived narrowness. Critics argue that focusing solely on profit ignores the broader impact corporations have on society, such as environmental degradation, income inequality, and labor exploitation. They contend that businesses wield immense power and thus have a duty to address social challenges proactively.

Conversely, supporters maintain that Friedman’s framework safeguards economic efficiency and prevents executives from overstepping their authority. They caution that expanding corporate mandates risks diluting accountability and could lead to inefficiencies or misguided priorities.

Key Concepts Related to Milton Friedman the Social Responsibility of Business

To fully grasp the nuances of Friedman’s argument, it helps to understand several related ideas often discussed alongside his work.

Shareholder vs. Stakeholder Theory

- **Shareholder Theory:** Advocates for prioritizing shareholder interests, aligning closely with Friedman’s perspective.
- **Stakeholder Theory:** Proposes that companies should balance the needs of all parties affected by

business operations.

This dichotomy underscores ongoing debates about the purpose of a corporation and the role of business in society.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR involves voluntary actions by companies to address social, environmental, and ethical concerns. While Friedman was skeptical of CSR if it detracted from profit, today many businesses integrate CSR into their core strategies, believing it builds brand reputation and customer loyalty.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investing

ESG criteria are used by investors to assess how well companies manage risks related to sustainability and social impact. The rise of ESG reflects growing recognition that non-financial factors can influence long-term business performance.

How Businesses Can Navigate Social Responsibility Today

Given the tensions between profit maximization and social engagement highlighted by Milton Friedman the social responsibility of business, how can companies strike the right balance?

Aligning Social Goals with Business Strategy

One practical approach is for firms to integrate social responsibility in ways that complement their business objectives. For instance, a company might reduce carbon emissions to lower costs and meet regulatory requirements while also improving its public image.

Engaging Stakeholders Transparently

Open dialogue with stakeholders helps businesses understand societal expectations and tailor their actions accordingly. Transparency builds trust and can prevent backlash from perceived corporate irresponsibility.

Measuring Impact and Reporting Progress

Using clear metrics to track social and environmental performance allows companies to demonstrate accountability. This practice is increasingly important to investors who value ESG disclosures.

Why Milton Friedman's Ideas Still Matter

Even as business norms evolve, Milton Friedman the social responsibility of business remains a foundational reference point. His insistence on economic efficiency and shareholder accountability continues to influence corporate governance and economic policy debates. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his views, understanding Friedman's arguments is essential for anyone interested in the ethical dimensions of business.

In fact, the ongoing dialogue between Friedman's shareholder primacy and modern stakeholder approaches fuels much of today's discourse on sustainable capitalism. Companies, policymakers, and academics alike wrestle with finding the right equilibrium between profit and purpose—a challenge that makes Friedman's work as relevant now as ever.

Exploring Milton Friedman the social responsibility of business reveals a rich and complex conversation about the role of corporations in society. While Friedman championed profit as the ultimate goal, the expanding expectations placed on businesses today suggest that social responsibility and financial success can, and perhaps must, go hand in hand. As this debate unfolds, companies are tasked with navigating new demands thoughtfully, balancing economic realities with the broader impact they have on the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main argument of Milton Friedman's essay 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits'?

Milton Friedman argues that the primary responsibility of business is to its shareholders, meaning that a business's main social responsibility is to increase its profits within the bounds of the law and ethical custom.

How does Milton Friedman view corporate social responsibility (CSR)?

Friedman is skeptical of corporate social responsibility initiatives that do not directly contribute to profit-making, believing that businesses engaging in social causes are essentially spending shareholders' money on

social issues rather than focusing on economic efficiency.

According to Friedman, who should be responsible for addressing social issues if not businesses?

Friedman contends that addressing social issues is the role of individuals and governments through democratic processes, not corporations, which should focus on maximizing shareholder value.

What ethical framework underpins Milton Friedman's view on business responsibilities?

Friedman's view is grounded in a free-market, shareholder primacy ethical framework, emphasizing individual rights, economic freedom, and limited government intervention.

How has Milton Friedman's perspective influenced modern business practices?

Friedman's perspective has significantly influenced the emphasis on shareholder value in corporate governance, often prioritizing profit maximization over broader social responsibilities.

What criticisms have been raised against Friedman's view on social responsibility of business?

Critics argue that Friedman's approach ignores the broader impact businesses have on society and the environment, and that companies have a duty to consider stakeholders beyond shareholders, including employees, communities, and the environment.

Did Milton Friedman completely oppose all forms of corporate social responsibility?

Friedman did not oppose all CSR but insisted that any social responsibility initiatives must align with the interests of shareholders and be legal and ethical; otherwise, they are a misuse of corporate resources.

How does Friedman's view contrast with stakeholder theory?

While Friedman emphasizes maximizing shareholder profits, stakeholder theory argues that businesses have responsibilities to a broader group including employees, customers, suppliers, and the community.

What impact did Milton Friedman's 1970 New York Times article have

on the debate about business ethics?

Friedman's article sparked extensive debate by challenging the then-growing trend of corporate social responsibility, reinforcing the idea that businesses should focus on profit and leaving social issues to governments and individuals.

Additional Resources

Milton Friedman and the Social Responsibility of Business: A Critical Examination

milton friedman the social responsibility of business is a phrase that immediately recalls the seminal 1970 article the economist penned for The New York Times Magazine. Friedman's thesis, succinct yet provocative, challenged prevailing notions about corporate ethics by asserting that the sole social responsibility of business is to increase its profits, so long as it operates within the rules of law and ethical custom. This perspective not only ignited debates that reverberate in business ethics and corporate governance today but also shaped the ideological underpinnings of modern capitalism.

Understanding Friedman's argument requires navigating the intersection of economics, ethics, and corporate strategy. His viewpoint stands in contrast to broader interpretations of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which emphasize a corporation's role in addressing social and environmental issues beyond mere profitability. In this analysis, we unpack the nuances of Milton Friedman's stance on the social responsibility of business, explore its implications, and assess its relevance in contemporary discourse.

The Core Argument of Milton Friedman's Social Responsibility Thesis

Milton Friedman's article, titled "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," centers on the premise that corporate executives act as agents of the shareholders whose primary concern is profit maximization. According to Friedman, when executives engage in activities purportedly aimed at social good—such as charitable giving or environmental initiatives—they are effectively spending shareholders' money without explicit consent, which he equates to a form of taxation or "taxation without representation."

Friedman posits that corporate managers should focus exclusively on generating economic value while abiding by the "rules of the game," which include legal frameworks and ethical norms. He warns against the dangers of corporate executives assuming roles traditionally held by government or civil society, arguing that such actions dilute accountability and potentially undermine market efficiency.

Key Tenets of Friedman's Philosophy

- **Profit Maximization as Primary Responsibility:** The fundamental duty of business is to increase shareholder wealth.
- **Role of Corporate Executives:** Executives are agents, not social policymakers; their mandate is business success within legal boundaries.
- **Limits of Social Engagement:** Social goals should not override economic objectives unless explicitly authorized by shareholders.
- **Market Mechanisms Over Social Engineering:** Friedman champions market-driven solutions rather than corporate-led social initiatives.

Contextualizing Friedman's View within Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The concept of CSR has evolved significantly since Friedman's 1970 pronouncement. Today, many firms integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into their operations, reflecting a broader interpretation of their societal role. This evolution raises questions about the compatibility of Friedman's profit-centric model with contemporary expectations of corporate citizenship.

Comparing Friedman's Perspective with Modern CSR Approaches

Where Friedman emphasizes fiduciary duty to shareholders, modern CSR frameworks advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach. This approach accounts for employees, customers, communities, and the environment alongside investors. Companies like Patagonia and Unilever demonstrate that integrating social responsibility can coexist with, and sometimes enhance, long-term profitability.

However, critics argue that CSR initiatives can sometimes be superficial or driven by public relations motives rather than genuine ethical commitments. From this vantage, Friedman's insistence on profit maximization serves as a cautionary reminder against potential inefficiencies or misallocations of corporate resources.

Economic Data and Corporate Performance

Empirical studies on the relationship between CSR and financial performance yield mixed results. Some meta-analyses suggest a positive correlation, indicating that socially responsible companies may enjoy enhanced brand loyalty, risk management, and employee satisfaction, which translate into financial gains. Conversely, other research highlights the costs and complexities of CSR implementation that may detract from shareholder returns in the short term.

Friedman's argument implicitly prioritizes the clarity and measurability of profit over the more ambiguous outcomes of social initiatives. This tension continues to fuel debates in the fields of business ethics and corporate governance.

Critiques and Enduring Influence of Friedman's Thesis

Milton Friedman's articulation of the social responsibility of business has faced considerable critique, particularly from advocates of stakeholder theory and sustainable business practices.

Criticisms of Friedman's Framework

- **Neglect of Stakeholder Interests:** Critics argue Friedman's narrow focus on shareholders ignores the legitimate claims of other stakeholders.
- **Changing Social Expectations:** As societal values shift toward environmental sustainability and social equity, purely profit-driven models may appear outdated.
- **Ethical Limitations:** Some contend that ethical business requires proactive engagement with social issues, not mere compliance with laws and norms.
- **Potential for Externalities:** Profit maximization without regard for social impact can lead to negative externalities like pollution and inequality.

Despite these critiques, Friedman's thesis remains a cornerstone in economic and business education. His clear articulation of the agency problem and the primacy of shareholder interests continues to inform corporate governance debates and policy discussions.

The Enduring Legacy in Business Education and Practice

Friedman's influence extends into the curricula of business schools worldwide, where his perspective on corporate responsibility frames discussions on the role of management. Many executives cite his work when defending shareholder primacy, especially in industries where profit margins are slim and competitive pressures intense.

At the same time, progressive business leaders increasingly advocate for hybrid models that reconcile Friedman's insights with broader social imperatives. This pragmatic synthesis reflects an ongoing evolution in how the social responsibility of business is understood and operationalized.

Reconciling Profit Motives with Social Responsibility

The tension between Friedman's profit-centric view and the expanding role of CSR highlights a central challenge for modern businesses: balancing economic objectives with societal expectations.

Strategies for Integrating Social Responsibility Without Sacrificing Profit

Businesses can pursue socially responsible initiatives that align with their core competencies and market strategies. For example:

1. **Shared Value Creation:** Developing products and services that address social issues while generating revenue.
2. **Risk Management:** Proactively addressing environmental and social risks that could undermine business sustainability.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Building trust and legitimacy through transparent communication and community involvement.
4. **Innovation:** Leveraging CSR as a driver for innovative solutions that open new markets.

Such approaches suggest that social responsibility and profit are not necessarily antagonistic but can be mutually reinforcing when strategically managed.

Regulatory and Market Pressures

Increasingly, regulatory frameworks and investor preferences are pushing companies toward greater social accountability. ESG investing, for example, has surged in popularity, with global assets under management reaching trillions of dollars. This shift creates incentives for companies to incorporate social and environmental considerations into their business models, sometimes beyond what Friedman's original framework envisioned.

Nonetheless, navigating these pressures requires careful calibration to avoid the pitfalls Friedman warned against—namely, managerial overreach and dilution of shareholder mandates.

Milton Friedman's articulation of the social responsibility of business remains a foundational yet contested reference point in discussions of corporate purpose. While his emphasis on profit maximization within legal and ethical boundaries underscores essential principles of market economies, evolving societal expectations and empirical evidence suggest a more nuanced understanding is necessary. The dynamic interplay between shareholder interests and broader social concerns continues to shape the future of business ethics, governance, and strategy.

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milton friedman the social responsibility of business: "The social responsibility of business..." - A position paper on Milton Friedman David Federhen, 2004-07-13 Seminar paper from the year 2004 in the subject Business economics - Business Ethics, Corporate Ethics, grade: A- = 1-, International University in Germany Bruchsal (Department of Sciences and Liberal Arts), language: English, abstract: In the aftermath of recent business scandals such as Enron, Worldcom, and Parmalat the discussion about 'Ethics in Business', which was not exactly a hot topic during the last 20 years or so, has been inflamed anew. However, ethical corporate governance, the catch line of countless discussions in recent times, is only one but many aspects to ethics in business. This paper will focus on the aspect of corporate social responsibility rather than the issue of corporate governance. Although not as hot as corporate governance, corporate social responsibility is certainly no less important as incidents like the Exxon Valdez accident in 1989 clearly demonstrate. In fact, corporate social responsibility even covers the topic of corporate governance since governance failures as observed at companies like Enron do not only hurt a company's shareholders but to a large extent also most of a company's stakeholders - which in the end often make up a considerable part of society. Milton Friedman's (in-)famous 1970 article "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" will serve to represent the libertarian view which assumes great credibility to concepts like 'Agency Theory' and the 'Invisible Hand'. After elucidating Friedman's 'classical' liberalist approach, which in itself makes perfect sense, this paper will point towards the deficiencies of Friedman's argument. By applying a broader understanding of how corporate social responsibility is to be derived it becomes obvious that Friedman is telling only part of the story. This consideration will then serve as a foundation for the attempt of developing a framework of corporate social responsibility which goes beyond increasing profits only. [...]

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Friedman and the social responsibility of corporation Minh Vu, 2010-09-16 Essay aus dem Jahr 2010 im Fachbereich BWL - Unternehmensethik, Wirtschaftsethik, Note: 1,6, Grenoble Ecole de Management, Sprache: Deutsch, Abstract: The Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman was praised by The Economist (2006) as "the most influential economist of the second half of the 20th century...possibly of all of it. In 1970, he published an essay on the social responsibility of business in the New York Times Magazine. In his article, he explains in complex detail about the notion of "social responsibility" of businessmen within a corporate environment and their goal to increase profits. Indeed, at first glance, this quote seems to capture the mentality of many of the actors in the financial sector in our era. Banks and financial institutions are accused of acting unethically and only in their self-interest to increase profits along with brokers and investment bankers who are accused of primarily aiming high incentives and bonuses by selling unconscionably high-default assets. Scholars argued that corporate governance failings and lack of ethical behaviour were significant causes of the financial crisis of autumn 2008 (Skypala, 2008). This essay discusses the question whether the above statement made by famous economist Milton Friedman is still relevant in the context of business today and to what extent it is relating to the financial sector and in particular to the financial crisis of autumn 2008.

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milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility William B. Werther, Jr., David Chandler, 2011 Blending theory with practical application, this comprehensive text supports courses at the intersection of corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate strategy, and public policy. Part I provides an overview of the field, defining CSR and placing it in the context of wider corporate strategy. Part II contains chapters on CSR issues related to the organization, the economy, and society, and provides detailed case studies on a variety of well-known firms. Adopting a stakeholder perspective, the authors explore CSR issues within the complex global business environment in which corporations operate today.

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milton friedman the social responsibility of business: The Public Relations Handbook

Alison Theaker, 2004 In this updated edition of the successful handbook, a detailed introduction to the theories and practices of the public relations industry is given. Broad in scope, it traces the history and development of public relations, explores ethical issues which affect the industry, examines its relationships with politics, lobbying organisations and journalism, assesses its professionalism and regulation, and advises on training and entry into the profession. It includes: * interviews with press officers and PR agents about their working practices * case studies, examples, press releases and illustrations from a range of campaigns including Railtrack, Marks and Spencer, Guinness and the Metropolitan Police * specialist chapters on financial public relations, global PR, business ethics, on-line promotion and the challenges of new technology * over twenty illustrations from recent PR campaigns. In this revised and updated practical text, Alison Theaker successfully combines theoretical and organisational frameworks for studying public relations with examples of how the industry works in practice.

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milton friedman the social responsibility of business: International Corporate Social Responsibility Ramon Mullerat, 2010-01-01 At present, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for some may not be more than an attitude. Can it be more? What degree of commitment can we reasonably expect of corporations in the struggle to eradicate poverty, promote human rights, halt climate change and reverse ongoing environmental destruction? It is not a question of power; more than half of the world's top 100 economies are corporations, not nation-states. Whatever can be done to fix the world's problems, corporations are in the best position to do [it].--Back cover.

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility David Chandler, 2022-09-12 Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Sustainable Value Creation (Sixth Edition) redefines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as being central to the value-creating purpose of the firm. Based on a theory of empowered stakeholders, this bestselling text argues that the responsibility of a corporation is to create value, broadly defined. The primary challenge for managers today is to balance the competing interests of the firm's stakeholders' understanding that what they expect today may not be what they will expect tomorrow. This tension is what makes CSR so complex and demanding, but it is also what makes CSR integral to the firm's strategy and day-to-day operations. In this new Sixth Edition, author David Chandler explores issues around COVID-19, the BLM movement, the supply chain crunch, and the great resignation.

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Corporate Social Responsibility David Chandler, 2014-11-15 The goal of this project is to detail the core, defining principles of strategic CSR that differentiate it as a concept from the rest of the CSR/sustainability/business ethics field. It is designed to be a provocative piece, but one that solidifies the intellectual

framework around an emerging concept--strategic CSR. The foundation for these principles comes from my perspective as a management professor within the business school. As such, it is a pragmatic philosophy, oriented around stakeholder theory, that is designed to persuade business leaders who are skeptical of existing definitions and organizing principles of CSR, sustainability, or business ethics. It is also designed to stimulate thought within the community of intellectuals and business school administrators committed to these issues, but who approach them from more traditional perspectives. Ultimately, therefore, the purpose of the strategic CSR concept (and this book) is radical--it aims to redefine both business education and business practice. By building a theory that defines CSR as core to business operations and value creation (as opposed to peripheral practices that can be marginalized within the firm), these defining principles become applicable across the range of operational functions. As such, they redefine how businesses approach these functions in practice, but also redefine how these subjects should be taught in business schools.

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Friedman at 50 Karthik Ramanna, 2020 2020 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Milton Friedman's influential clarion call to American business - that their "social responsibility" is to increase profits. In the period since, even as corporations internalized this message to a degree perhaps Friedman himself did not conceive, our public institutions have retreated in scope and scale. Today, many corporations, plush with the power accumulated through unfettered profit seeking, and worried about deteriorating state capacity, are offering to step in and address pressing social problems such as climate change. Witness the Business Roundtable's remarkable about-face last year on its longstanding shareholders-first policy. Tempting as this may seem, beware the cure worse than the disease - corporate colonization of the public sphere is a threat to liberal democracy. Corporations, now ever more so, are designed to turn a profit, and in an increasingly cutthroat globalized economy this is a good and useful thing. But corporations should not be expected to solve society's non-market problems - encouraging them to do so will further depreciate public institutions and, moreover, the evidence suggests corporations will simply use such political engagement as an opportunity to extract more profit.

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: Corporate Governance and Accountability Jill Solomon, 2007-03-16 Courses in corporate governance and corporate social responsibility are growing in number at universities in many countries. This textbook covers corporate governance for the UK market.

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: *Dictionary of Corporate Social Responsibility* Samuel O. Idowu, Nicholas Capaldi, Matthias S. Fifka, Liangrong Zu, René Schmidpeter, 2015-02-03 This book is a concise and authoritative reference work and dictionary in the field of corporate social responsibility, sustainability, business ethics and corporate governance. It provides reliable definitions to more than 600 terms and concepts for researchers and professionals alike. By its definitions the dictionary helps users to understand the meanings of commonly used terms in CSR, and the roles and functions of CSR-related international organizations. Furthermore, it helps to identify keynotes on international guidelines, codes and principles relevant to CSR. The role of CSR in the business world has developed from a fig leaf marketing front into an important and indispensable aspect of corporate behavior over the past years. Sustainable strategies are valued, desired and deployed more and more by relevant players in business, politics, and societies all over the world. Both research and corporate practice therefore see CSR as a guiding principle for business success.

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Communication as an Instrument to Consumer-Relationship Marketing Elena Bueble, 2009-07 Diploma Thesis from the year 2008 in the subject Business economics - Marketing, Corporate Communication, CRM, Market Research, Social Media, grade: 1,0, University of Applied Sciences Bremen, language: English, abstract: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as achieving commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment and is the topic of interest for this research paper. The aim of study was to investigate CSR communication and how it is perceived with a view to identifying how CSR can be communicated more effectively to consumers. The focus in this context was on relational CSR potentials and the effect of consumer-company identification as a main driving force behind relational CSR effects. In order to achieve this aim a comprehensive literature review was conducted to conceptualise the ideas on CSR, the CSR communication challenge as well the link between CSR information and consumer-company identification. Further, primary research was undertaken in terms of a consumer survey among German students in order to gain an understanding of consumer perceptions as well as to identify critical aspects of CSR communication. Results indicate that in spite of a general tendency of scepticism towards companies, consumers do accept and expect companies to communicate on their CSR activities. It also became apparent that interest in and support of the subject clearly exceed the awareness level, which suggests an unmet receptiveness regarding CSR information. In this context, women showed significantly more support and interest in the topic corroborating the established hypothesis of respective gender differences which was established within the theoretical discussion. As a conclusion of this study female consumers have to be considered as particularly receptive towards CSR information and as a particular valuable target for CSR communication. The high level of support in general and especially am

milton friedman the social responsibility of business: The Moral Case for Profit Maximization Robert White, 2020-04-01 The Moral Case for Profit Maximization argues that profit maximization is moral when businessmen seek to maximize profit by creating goods or services that are of objective value. Traditionally, profit maximization has been defended on economic grounds. Profit, economists argue, incentivizes businessmen to produce goods and services. In this view, businessmen do not need to be virtuous as long as they deliver the goods. It challenges the traditional defense of profit maximization, arguing that profit maximization is morally ambitious because it requires businessmen to form normative abstractions and to cultivate a virtuous character. In so doing, the author also challenges the moral basis of corporate social responsibility. Proponents of CSR argue that businessmen can do good while doing well. This book argues that businessmen already do good by maximizing profit, drawing upon the histories of the wheel, the refrigerator, and the shipping container, as well as the biographies of J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and Thomas Edison to demonstrate the role of values in the creation of material goods and the role of the virtues in value creation. The author challenges readers to rethink the relationship between profit, value, and virtue.

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